

Chairman Michael McCaul
Opening Remarks
As Prepared for Delivery

Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management
“A Call to Action: Narco-Terrorism’s Threat to the Southern U.S. Border”

October 14, 2011

Today we meet to examine the threat facing our nation along the Southwest border from a strategic military perspective, from the testimony of two of our nation’s finest generals, and a Commissioner from Texas whose farmers and ranchers live with the daily threats from drug cartels.

Earlier this week we learned that a plot was foiled in which a U.S. informant, posing as a member of a Mexican drug cartel, was approached by terrorists plotting to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador to the United States.

Although the attack was thwarted, this incident implies the existence of ties between terrorists and the drug cartels. It is unlikely this sensitive Iranian mission would have been this terrorist group’s first attempted encounter with the drug cartels. Indeed, it underscores the need to examine the deteriorating situation in Mexico and our border security initiatives.

This hearing also comes on the heels of the release of the eye-opening report by General Barry McCaffrey and General Robert Scales, *Texas Border Security: A Strategic Military Assessment*. Their report and past hearings held by this subcommittee underscore the need for a comprehensive review of the federal government’s role in protecting the border.

Violence in Mexico is spreading in ways that increasingly show characteristics of terrorism. The discovery of 32 bodies in Veracruz, the dumping of 35 bodies on a busy Mexican expressway,

and the placement of severed heads at the entrance of a primary school in an effort to extort money from teachers, are all examples of the violent and disturbing actions of Mexican-based drug cartels.

I have introduced legislation that would designate the cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. The bill states, “Foreign drug cartels have used brutal tactics of violence and the threat of violence against United States citizens to protect and expand their drug trade as well as their areas of operation.”

Indeed, reports from law enforcement on both sides of the border underscore these violent extremes:

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, a review of information from multiple sources shows 224 decapitations have been reported in Mexico since January 2009 including 64 from January to June 2011.

- In at least 8 instances since 2009, bullets fired from Mexico crossed into Texas.
- Since 2009 there have been at least 64 border-related shootings at U.S. law enforcement officers in Texas.
- Since 2008, smugglers in Texas have deployed spikes to disable U.S. patrol vehicles in 77 incidents.
- Since 2004 there have been at least 120 drug-related and alien-related kidnappings reported in Texas.

The McCaffrey/Scales report lays out in detail the threat the cartels pose to the United States and steps we can take to combat the hostility. The report concludes that cartels exploit “creases”

within the ranks of American authorities in order to penetrate the border. This leads to channeling of both drugs and violence into the United States. The report reveals:

- The cartels' intention to influence all levels of government throughout the Americas.
- The cartels' intention to establish sanctuary zones in the United States one county deep.
- That U.S. tactical efforts to stop cartel incursions are poorly resourced and are vulnerable to corruption.
- And, the increasing likelihood that competition to control distribution territories and corridors will result in greater violence in Texas, as the Mexican military gains more control in Mexico.

The 2011 National Drug Threat Assessment conducted by the Department of Justice, buttresses the conclusions of the McCaffery/Scales report. It notes that Transnational Criminal Organizations are now operating in more than one thousand cities in the United States. According to the department's assessment, these cities now span all nine Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force regions and enable Mexican-based cartels to operate more extensively in the United States. The problem has manifested into a national network of criminal activity, driven and organized by the drug cartels.

McCaffery and Scales outline the innovative and groundbreaking efforts of the Texas authorities to pool resources and fight back against the encroachment of the cartels on Texan and American sovereignty. Through their Unified Commands and Joint Operations and Intelligence Centers, Texas officials have provided an effective model for other states dealing with the narco-criminal threat.

As the report notes, “The Texas Campaign against the cartels has proven the value of a control scheme that involves state, local, and federal partnerships without sacrificing the sovereignty of any agency.” Texas has taken the bold and necessary steps to protect its citizens and that the federal government has failed to implement. We are here today to learn more about these efforts and how they might be helpful as a model going forward.

I am honored to have such esteemed public servants before the Subcommittee today. I look forward to their testimony so that we may continue the dialogue on this threat to our nation that is constantly growing stronger and consistently evolving.

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